

Principal Researcher

Faro Taug

Instructor

Beth Larcombe

Research Field

Disaster Recovery

Program

BESMS

Course

ESMS 4900: Capstone
Research Project

Funding Sources

N/A: Course-based
Project.

Effective Evidence-Based Post Disaster Recovery Interventions

This project addresses the increasing need for effective evidence-based interventions to assist individuals and communities recover from disasters by providing three readymade recovery interventions proven to address the most common disaster impact, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Research Problem & Rationale for Study

As more individuals and communities are impacted by disasters, the need for evidence-based recovery interventions is increasing. However, often professional emergency managers do not have time to do time consuming research to stay abreast of current discoveries and applications in the field. By providing research on recovery, including readymade interventions that emergency managers can easily deploy, recovery outcomes will be improved for affected individuals and the community as a whole.

Methods

This research project was a secondary source, qualitative research study using peer reviewed journal articles from the JIBC library database.

Results/Findings

Research was discovered which can inform practice, such as the most common disaster impact, PTSD. As well as common recovery factors which can be both protective and negative outcome reinforcing. In addition, three ready-made evidence-based recovery interventions were identified: Collective Narrative Therapy (CNT), Happy Sad Letter Box (HSLB) and the Skills for Life Adjustment and Resilience program (SOLAR). These interventions were especially significant because they were low cost and could be used without the need for scarce resources such as highly trained medical professionals.

Conclusions / Recommendations

There was much evidence discovered in the research on recovery that has immediate practical applications for emergency Managers in the field. However, much more research in this area is needed.

JIBC Research Brief

Structured Abstract

Introduction:

Natural disasters are increasing in frequency and severity, creating an urgent need for effective, evidence-based interventions to assist affected individuals and communities to recover. This study describes several such interventions, as well as other research which may provide evidence to inform individual and community recovery planning, including, common recovery impacts, and recovery factors.

Methods:

This research project is a qualitative study of peer reviewed secondary sources from the JIBC library database.

Results/Findings:

Three ready-made evidence-based recovery interventions were identified including:

- 1) The Collective Narrative Therapy (CNT) model can be used to create a community *storying* event for affected communities to collectively acknowledge the disaster, experiences of loss and surviving to promote healing (Breckenridge & James 2012). For example, a “Lytton Strong” community block party, and social networking campaign.
- 2) The Happy Sad Letter Box (HSLB) project can put locked boxes in schools for children to put letters in. School counselors can then identify children and young people and families at risk for developing psychological issues (Commers, Morival, Devries, 2014).
- 3) The Skills for Life Adjustment and Resilience (SOLAR) programme teaches healthy living skills over five sessions. It was found to be effective for reducing distress and PTSD in disaster survivors. It can be taught by trained non specialists, and addresses sub-clinical symptoms, reducing stress on professional health services (Gibson, Little, Cowlshaw, Ipitoa Toromon, Forbes, O'Donnell, 2021).

JIBC Research Brief

Discussion:

This paper identified common disaster impacts and positive and negative recovery factors. As well as a connection between individual and community level recovery. In addition to three peer reviewed post disaster recovery interventions. These interventions have been proven to reduce PTSD and other issues that disaster survivors suffer from, significantly improving recovery outcomes.

Practical Applications:

The research discovered in this project is practically impactful in four main ways. First by identifying common disaster impacts, such as PTSD, emergency managers will know what their community members are facing, as a start to addressing it. Further by understanding the factors which promote positive recovery such as social resources, emergency managers can work at providing these to their communities. Further by understanding the connection between individual and community level recovery, emergency managers can provide resources and interventions at both the individual and community level, greatly increasing their impact. Finally, this study identified several ready-mades, effective, evidence-based recovery interventions that can be easily deployed in the field by emergency managers who are currently assisting individuals in their communities recover from disasters.

References:

Breckenridge, J., & James, K. (2012). Therapeutic responses to communities affected by disasters: The contribution of family therapy. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 33(3), 242-256. <https://10.1017/aft.2012.29>

Commers, M. J., Morival, M., & Devries, M. W. (2014). Toward best-practice post-disaster mental health promotion for children: Sri Lanka. *Health Promotion International*, 29(1), 165-170. <https://10.1093/heapro/das047>

Gibson, K., Little, J., Cowlshaw, S., Ipitoa Toromon, T., Forbes, D., & O'Donnell, M. (2021). Piloting a scalable, post-trauma psychosocial intervention in Tuvalu: The Skills for Life Adjustment and Resilience (SOLAR) program. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 12(1), 1-15. <https://10.1080/20008198.2021.1948253>